

1 Thessalonians 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Analysis

For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God—kopon kai mochthon (κόπον καὶ μόχθον, 'labor and toil') indicates exhausting work unto weariness. Paul worked nykta kai hēmeran ergazomenoi (νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν ἐργαζόμενοι, 'working night and day') to support himself through tentmaking while conducting evangelistic ministry. Pros to mē epibarēsai tina hymōn (πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν, 'in order not to burden any of you') explains his motive: removing financial obstacles to the gospel.

Paul's self-support accomplished multiple purposes:

1. proved his motives weren't mercenary
2. modeled diligent work for believers tempted toward idleness (4:11-12; 2 Thess 3:7-10)
3. removed the appearance of exploitation
4. enabled ministry to the poor who couldn't support teachers.

Yet this wasn't legalism—Paul accepted support from established churches (Phil 4:15-16) and taught ministers' right to support (1 Cor 9:14). His voluntary sacrifice demonstrated love exceeding obligation, authenticating the costly gospel he preached.

Historical Context

Tentmaking was portable, skilled labor suitable for traveling missionaries. Paul likely made leather tents for Roman military use (a major industry in Thessalonica, a garrison city). Working 'night and day' meant crafting tents during daylight hours, then teaching and evangelizing evenings. Synagogue teaching on Sabbaths (Acts 17:2) added to this schedule. The physical and emotional exhaustion ('labor and travail') demonstrated Paul's commitment. His self-support was particularly remarkable in a culture where manual labor was considered degrading for educated free men.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's voluntary sacrifice of legitimate financial support challenge contemporary assumptions about pastoral compensation?
2. What role does a minister's willingness to work sacrificially play in validating the gospel's cost and value?
3. How do you distinguish between appropriate financial stewardship in ministry and exploitative patterns disguised as faith?

Interlinear Text

μνημονεύετε	γάρ,	ἀδελφοί	τὸν	κόπον	ἡμῶν	καὶ	τὸν
ye remember G3421	For G1063	brethren G80	G3588	labour G2873	our G2257	and G2532	G3588
μόχθον·	νυκτὸς	γάρ,	καὶ	ἡμέρας	ἐργαζόμενοι	πρὸς	τὸ
travail G3449	night G3571	For G1063	and G2532	day G2250	labouring G2038	because G4314	G3588
μὴ	ἐπιβαρῆσαι	τινα	ὑμῶν	ἐκηρύξαμεν	εἰς	ὑμᾶς	τὸ
not G3361	be chargeable G1912	unto any G5100	of you G5216	we preached G2784	unto G1519	you G5209	G3588
εὐαγγέλιον	τοῦ	θεοῦ					
the gospel G2098	G3588	of God G2316					

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 11:9 (Parallel theme): And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

Acts 18:3 (Parallel theme): And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

Nehemiah 5:15 (References God): But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

Nehemiah 5:18 (Parallel theme): Now that which was prepared for me daily was one ox and six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

1 Corinthians 4:12 (Parallel theme): And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

1 Corinthians 9:18 (Parallel theme): What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:15 (Parallel theme): But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

1 Timothy 4:10 (References God): For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:6 (Parallel theme): Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

2 Timothy 1:3 (References God): I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;